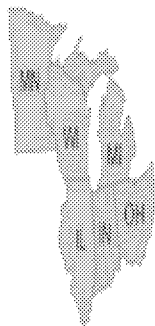


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Great Lakes

# Region 5 Intelligence Briefing



November 12, 2021

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## Great Lakes

### Environmentalists Have High Hopes For New Administrator.

**Great Lakes Now (MI)** (11/11, Ahlborn) reports “environmental groups say they hope that...new EPA Administrator for the Great Lakes Region” Debra Shore “works to restore infrastructure while revitalizing an agency they say is depleted and demoralized.” Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition Director Laura Rubin said, “Shore has experience in working with communities and focusing funds to develop local workforces where we’re ensuring that communities are engaged in decision-making processes and ensuring transparency.” Shore declined to be interviewed.

### Climate Change Will Cost Great Lakes Region Dearly.

**USA Today** (11/11, Schafer) reports in a 1,690-word article that “Cities along the Lake Michigan coast are already feeling the pull on their purse strings” from damage caused by extreme weather. According to the EPA, the “cost of adapting urban storm water systems to handle more intense and frequent storms in the Midwest region could exceed \$480 million per year by the end of the century.” Great Lakes Integrated Sciences and Assessments co-principal investigator Richard Rood said, “We’re not at a new normal. We’re just at the beginning of a time of really quite rapid climate change.”

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## Illinois

### Advocates, Activists Call On Chicago Mayor To Deny General Iron Permit.

The **Chicago Tribune** (11/11, Soglin) reports residents and advocates on Chicago’s Southeast Side held a news conference Thursday and “called on Mayor Lori Lightfoot and the city’s Department of Public Health to deny a permit for the relocation of a metal-shredding facility owned by Ohio-based Reserve Management Group to the Southeast Side, and they criticized the city for excluding community voices during the permitting process.” Public health practitioner and a member of the Collaborative for Health Equity Cook County Joanna Tess said, “The city’s own air quality data shows that the Southeast Side lies within the worst decile of air quality and health. Adding additional pollution will worsen present environmental racialized inequities in segregated Chicago.” In May EPA Administrator Michael Regan wrote to Lightfoot, “Because of these well-known degraded environmental conditions, the siting of this

facility in Chicago's southeast side has raised significant civil rights concerns," and "Lightfoot initiated a more thorough investigation into environmental health risks on the Southeast Side."

**WFLD-TV** Chicago (11/11), **WFLD-TV** (11/11), and **WGN-TV** (11/11) also report.

## **Activists Recall Struggle Against General Iron.**

**South Side Weekly** (11/11, Jay), in a 5,500-word article, interviews activists who have opposed General Iron over the years. The 11 activists represent a variety of backgrounds. Many of them participated in the hunger strike to protest the recycling plant.

## **Rep. Rush Writes To EPA Administrator Asking For Action On Dixmoor Water.**

The **Chicago Tribune** (11/11, Buckley) reports Rep. Bobby Rush (D-IL) is urging the EPA and State of Illinois "to take action to secure 'affordable and dependable supplies of clean water' for residents in the south suburbs following a weekslong crisis in Dixmoor that left thousands without reliable water." Rush "sent a letter Wednesday night to EPA Administrator Michael S. Regan asking him to work with Illinois to rectify problems outlined in a Nov. 8 Chicago Tribune story that highlighted how crumbling infrastructure and political disagreements led to the Dixmoor crisis."

## **Need To Water Infrastructure Overall Is Great.**

**Newsbug (IL)** (11/11, Morton) reprints an article from CQ-Roll Call that reports, "Distressed communities across the country are clamoring for federal money to help upgrade aging" water "systems." The "\$11.7 billion each for the Drinking Water State Revolving Loan Fund and the Clean Water State Revolving Fund" are the "single largest investment" the federal government has ever made in water infrastructure, according to EPA Assistant Administrator for Water Radhika Fox, speaking on a Tuesday press call.

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# **Michigan**

## **Partial Settlement For \$626.25M Reached In Flint Water Case.**

The **Detroit Free Press** (11/10, Egan) reports, "a federal judge on Wednesday gave final approval to a \$626.25 million settlement of civil claims against the state of Michigan and a handful of other parties resulting from the lead poisoning of Flint's drinking water." The settlement, "is still only considered a partial settlement of civil claims," since "some defendants, such as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, are not part of the settlement." Former Flint Mayor Karen Weaver "drew unfavorable comparisons between the Flint settlement, to be shared among about 50,000 residents who are predominantly people of color, and other recent settlements impacting mostly white communities." Weaver "pointed to Michigan State University's \$500-million settlement with 332 women sexually abused by former sports doctor Larry Nassar."

The **AP** (11/10) reports, "Most of the money – \$600 million – is coming from the state of Michigan, which was accused of repeatedly overlooking the risks of using the Flint River without properly treating the water." The deal makes about 80% of the money "left after legal fees" available to "Flint children who were exposed to the water, adults who can show an injury, certain business owners and anyone who paid water bills."

The **Washington Post** (11/11) reports District Judge Judith Levy said, "Plaintiffs' motion for attorney fees will be addressed in a separate opinion and order." Attorneys are "seeking as much as \$200 million in legal fees from the overall settlement."

The **Flint (MI) Township View** (11/11) reports the money that does not go to Flint residents "who were under the age of 18 at the time of the crisis" will go to "special education services in Genesee County, adults, business owners and property owners who suffered property damage." Flint Mayor Sheldon Neeley said, "Today's decision by Judge Levy creates a path to resolve years of suffering for the residents of Flint. While no amount of money will heal the wounds inflicted on this community, this judgment provides some sense of comfort to Flint families. There is still much work to do that includes a thorough review of the judgment."

**AP** (11/10) provides a timeline of the Flint case, beginning with the decision to draw water from the Flint River in 2014.

**CNN** (11/10, Ly) also reports.

## **Program To Help Benton Harbor Residents Pay Water Bills.**

The **AP** (11/11) reports state officials announced a federally-funded pilot program Wednesday to help eligible residents of Benton Harbor "pay water and wastewater bills." The program "is designed to help households that have had water disconnected or are facing disconnection pay to have it restored," and "includes other potential related costs including trash, cable and internet." Michigan Department of Human Services Director Elizabeth Hertel said, "The Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program will provide critical emergency support to qualified Benton Harbor residents, so they are not forced to choose between paying for water services and other necessities."

## **Benton Harbor Residents Sue City, State Officials, Others, Over Water.**

The **St. Joseph (MI) Herald Palladium** (11/11, Wrege) reports a group of Benton Harbor residents – seven adults and nine children, ages 4 months to 17 years, "filed a federal class action lawsuit Wednesday against" MI Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, Benton Harbor Mayor Marcus Muhammad, City Manager Ellis Mitchell, former City Manager Darwin Watson, and former Water Plant Operator Michael O'Malley, as well as "the city and F&V Operations and Resource Management, the company that has been supplying the city with a certified water plant operator since O'Malley left." The plaintiffs claim the defendants "didn't do enough to protect them against lead in some of the city's drinking water."

**ABC News** (11/10) reports, "Construction has finally begun in Benton Harbor, Michigan, to replace the lead-tainted service lines that have been poisoning the predominantly Black community's water supply for years."

## **Benton Harbor Mayor Critical Of EPA Report.**

**Great Lakes Now (MI)** (11/11) reports Benton Harbor Mayor Marcus Muhammad called the EPA report on the city's water system "blaming the victim, which is the classic conclusion of environmental racism in America. Because if you're going to diagnose the problem, but not come with solutions and funding, then your condemnation and your recommendation is a symbol without substance." Muhammad "says many of the problems in the water system were created under the city's first emergency manager, who was appointed by the state," and "the emergency manager tried to cut costs by eliminating staff in the water department."

**Three Types Of Testing Going On In Benton Harbor. WKZO-AM** Kalamazoo, MI (11/10, Kriss) reports "there are three testing activities" underway in Benton Harbor. They are: "filter testing to determine if certified filters are working...source of lead in water testing to determine if lead is present in a home's water," and "lead type testing to determine how much lead is present in small particles in drinking water."

**WBND-TV** South Bend, IN (11/11, Elliott) also reports.

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